ROBERT KIRKMAN CHARLIE ADLARD DAVE McCAIG

THE WALKING DEAD™

DELUXE

30 EST. 1992 image

51 NOV

FINCH

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ANTERIORMENTE:

Rick perdió el conocimiento y, al acercarse caminantes a su refugio, Carl se vio obligado a ocuparse él solo de ellos. Convencido de que iba a quedarse solo y con la incertidumbre de si Rick se estaba convirtiendo, Carl se preparó para cualquier destino que le esperara — incluso la muerte — pero Rick estaba vivo, y poco a poco se recuperó.

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¿CÓMO TE ENCUEN-TRAS?

MEJOR... MUCHO MEJOR. SEGUIRÉ TOMANDO LA MEDICINA QUE HABÍA AQUÍ--CREO QUE ME ESTÁ AYUDANDO.

AÚN ME SIENTO COMO SI UN CABALLO ME HUBIERA DADO UNA COZ EN EL ESTÓMAGO.

¿QUIERES QUE TE TRAIGA ALGO?

PODRÍAS LEVANTARTE DEL SOFÁ Y TRAERLE ALGO DE COMER A TU PADRE.

¿QUÉ NOS QUEDA?

JUDÍAS VERDES, JUDÍAS VERDES Y MÁS JUDÍAS VERDES.

=AINS=

DEBERÍAMOS HABER RACIONADO UN POCO MEJOR LA COMIDA. NUNCA ENTENDERÉ TU ADICCIÓN AL MAÍZ.

PUES JUDÍAS VERDES.

¿QUÉ ESTÁS HACIENDO?

LEER.

SE LLAMA *ELSEWHERE*... HAY ELFOS, ESTÁ MUY BIEN.

ANTES NO ME GUSTABA LEER. NUNCA LO HACÍA. HA PASADO MUCHO TIEMPO.... PERO PUEDE SER MÁS DIVERTIDO QUE LOS VIDEOJUEGOS.

ES MUY DIVERTIDO. OJALÁ LO HUBIERA HECHO MÁS ANTES.

ME ALEGRA OÍRLO. SIN EMBARGO-- PROBABLEMENTE NO DEBERÍAS HACERLO AQUÍ ABAJO. ESTÁ MUY OSCURO, TE DAÑARÁ LA VISTA.

DEBERÍAS IR A LA COCINA. LEE JUNTO A LA VENTANA.

VALE.

AH... ¿PAPÁ?

¿SÍ?

¿PUEDES VENIR CONMIGO?

HE ENCONTRADO MÁS ANTIBIÓTICOS-- ASPIRINAS, TIRITAS, MUCHAS COSAS ÚTILES. ¿QUÉ HABÍA EN LA COCINA?

NO MUCHO. COMIDA EN LATA, MAÍZ, SALSA DE ARÁNDANOS... MÁS JUDÍAS VERDES, PURÉ DE PATATAS... UNAS NUECES. NO ES GRAN COSA.

NOS LO LLEVAREMOS TODO. ESTOY SEGURO DE QUE HAY COSAS MEJORES EN LA TIENDA, PERO QUIERO RECOGER TODO LO QUE VALGA LA PENA POR SI ACASO.

DATE LA VUELTA PARA QUE PUEDA METER ESTO EN LA MOCHILA.

¿Y EL PAPEL HIGIÉNICO? CREO QUE SOLO NOS QUEDAN TRES ROLLOS EN LA OTRA CASA.

VOY A VER.

BINGO.

ARRIBA... ¿HAS OÍDO ESO?

NO ES NADA, SON LOS RUIDOS DE LA CASA. HEMOS REGISTRADO ESTE SITIO DOS VECES. ESTÁ VACÍA.

SI NO HUBIERA TANTAS VENTANAS ROTAS, NOS INSTALARÍAMOS AQUÍ.

EN CUALQUIER CASO, NO VAMOS A PASAR DEMASIADO TIEMPO AQUÍ.

COJAMOS LA COMIDA Y SALGAMOS DE AQUÍ.

¿PAPÁ?

ES VERANO, CARL--HACE UN TIEMPO MARAVILLOSO AQUÍ FUERA--Y NO LO PODEMOS DISFRUTAR.

HACE CALOR.

DE ESO SE TRATA-- ¿NO ES GENIAL?

ESPERA.

¿HAS OÍDO ESO? ENTRA-- *¡DEPRISA!*

¿QUÉ PASA?

¡DATE PRISA!

OH, DIOS-- *¡DEPRISA, DEPRISA, DEPRISA!*

¿DIGA?

OH, DIOS MÍO--NO ME PUEDO CREER QUE HAYAS COGIDO EL TELÉFONO. LLEVAMOS TANTO TIEMPO INTENTANDO QUE ALGUIEN... QUIÉN SEA CONTESTE A NUESTRAS LLAMADAS.
NO-- NO PUEDO CREER QUE ESTE TELÉFONO SIGA FUNCIONANDO... NO PUEDO--VAYA. ME ALEGRA ESCUCHAR LA VOZ DE ALGUIEN.
NO TE HACES UNA IDEA.

¿PAPÁ? ¿QUÉ--?

SHHH-- ¡CALLA UN MOMENTO, CARL!

ESTOY-- ESTOY HABLANDO CON ALGUIEN-- POR TELÉFONO.

NO PUEDO CREERLO, NO PUEDO--

NO TE IMAGINAS CUÁNTO TIEMPO LLEVAMOS ESPERANDO ESTO--ESTAMOS TAN SORPRENDIDOS COMO TÚ.

CREÍAMOS QUE ÉRAMOS LOS ÚNICOS--

"¿ESTAMOS?" ¿CUÁNTOS SOIS AHÍ?

UM... SOMOS CATORCE.

¿DÓNDE ESTÁIS?

NO PUEDO DECIRTE ESO, LO SIENTO. HEMOS TENIDO ALGUNOS ENCONTRONAZOS CON GENTE RECIENTEMENTE... EL GRUPO, NO ESTAMOS-- CON MUCHA CONFIANZA. LO SIENTO.

DEJA QUE HABLE YO CON TODOS... A VER SI PODEMOS PENSAR EN ALGO. ¿ESTÁS EN UN LUGAR SEGURO EN EL QUE PUEDAS QUEDARTE?

POR AHORA, SÍ-- ESO CREO.

VALE.

TE VOLVERÉ A LLAMAR... MAÑANA... A LA MISMA HORA. ¿VALE?

CLICK.

NO ME LO PUEDO CREER.

¿QUÉ PASA, PAPÁ? ¿QUIÉN ERA?

UNA *MUJER*... NO PODÍA DECIRME MUCHO, PERO--HAY MÁS GENTE AHÍ FUERA, CARL. ESTÁN A SALVO--ESTÁN SALIENDO ADELANTE, BUSCAN A MÁS GENTE...

NO ME LO PUEDO CREER.

Y... ¿QUÉ HACEMOS AHORA?

SI NO QUIERES VOLVER A COMER JUDÍAS VERDES ESTA NOCHE...

IREMOS A *CAZAR*.

NO PUEDO CREER QUE TODAVÍA NO HAYAMOS VISTO *NADA.*

¿CON TODO LO QUE HABLAS? *PUES YO SÍ.* LA VERDAD ES QUE HAY QUE SALIR A PRIMERA HORA--ACAMPAR EN UN SITIO Y ESPERAR A QUE UN CIERVO--O LO QUE SEA VENGA A NOSOTROS.

DE TODAS FORMAS NO TENÍA CLARO QUE FUÉRAMOS A VER NADA HOY, PERO VALÍA LA PENA INTENTARLO. MAÑANA INTENTAREMOS LEVANTARNOS TEMPRANO--VENDREMOS AQUÍ ANTES DE QUE ESA MUJER LLAME.

AHORA GUARDA SILENCIO--PUEDE QUE VEAMOS ALGO EN EL CAMINO DE VUELTA.

VALE.

¡YEEAAGGH!

CARL--

¡NO TE SEPARES!

¡GEEAARRGH!

¡¡SOCO-RRO!! ¡OH, DIOS NO!

¡NOOO!

RARRGH.

¡HUURRGH!

DIOS MÍO.

YEE-YEE--

¡¡YEEAAAGH!!

¡CARL!

¡NO!

¿QUÉ ESTÁS HACIENDO? NO DISPARES LA PISTOLA.

¿QUÉ?

PAPÁ-- ¡TENEMOS QUE SALVARLE!

NO, HIJO--YA LE HAN MORDIDO-- MIRA CUÁNTOS TIENE ENCIMA.

NO PUEDES SALVARLE. SOLO NOS PONDRÍAS EN PELIGRO-- A LO MEJOR LOS CONDUCIRÍAS HASTA LA CASA.

YEEAA--

GLLGGH.

VAMOS, CARL...

DEBERÍAMOS IRNOS.

ESTE NO ES EL CAMINO POR EL QUE HEMOS VENIDO-- NO SÉ A DÓNDE--

AH--

ALGUIEN SE HA DEJADO LA PUERTA ABIERTA...

QUIZÁS FUE AQUEL POBRE TIPO DE ANTES.

TENÍA COMBUSTIBLE EXTRA, ARMAS, UNA NEVERA PORTÁTIL CON COMIDA, LE HABRÍA DURADO UNA SEMANA-- QUIZÁS DOS. NO SÉ A QUÉ OTRA PERSONA PODRÍA PERTENECER ESTE COCHE.

ESE POBRE TIPO ESTABA BIEN ABASTE-CIDO.

¿POR QUÉ ALGUIEN CON... CON TODAS ESTAS COSAS SALDRÍA DE SU COCHE Y SE METERÍA EN EL BOSQUE SIN UN ARMA?

¿POR QUÉ?

CARL, ÉL--

OH, LO PILLO.

POR LO MISMO QUE CAROL...

VOY A ABRIR LA LATA MISTERIOSA. SI QUIERES UN POCO DE LO QUE SEA QUE--

PERDÓN, NO SABÍA QUE ESTABAS HABLANDO.

LO SIENTO.

SI TENÉIS PROVISIONES QUE ESTÉIS DISPUESTOS A COMPARTIR, NOS VENDRÍAN MUY BIEN-- ES LO ÚNICO QUE QUIERO DECIR.

ESCUCHA, TE SERÉ SINCERA. CONFÍO EN TI. DE VERDAD. PERO LOS DEMÁS... Y TENGO QUE PONERME DE SU LADO... NO LO TIENEN CLARO. CREEN QUE PARECES DEMASIADO ANSIOSO POR ENCONTRAR-NOS.

ESPERO QUE LO COMPRENDAS. HEMOS PERDIDO A MUCHA GENTE ÚLTIMAMENTE. TODOS ESTÁN NERVIOSOS-- SOLO NECESITAMOS ESTAR SEGUROS. NECESITAMOS TOMARNOS NUESTRO TIEMPO.

LO ENTIENDO, DE VERDAD. PERO MI HIJO Y YO LLEVAMOS DOS DÍAS SEGUIDOS SALIENDO A CAZAR Y NO HEMOS CONSEGUIDO ***NADA.***

AHORA TENEMOS UN COCHE-- Y SI NO ENCONTRAMOS ALGO MAÑANA--SI LAS COSAS NO EMPIEZAN A MEJORAR, ES POSIBLE QUE TENGAMOS QUE IRNOS DE AQUÍ.

TE VOLVERÉ A LLAMAR MAÑANA. POR FAVOR, NO OS VAYÁIS SIN HABLAR ANTES CONMIGO. HAY MUCHAS COSAS QUE CONSIDERAR. AUNQUE SUPIERAIS DÓNDE ESTAMOS--NO HAY GARANTÍAS DE QUE PUDIERAIS LLEGAR.

NO PODRÍA VIVIR CONMIGO MISMA SI TÚ O CARL MURIERAIS TRATANDO DE LLEGAR. ESPERAD AHÍ--LO SOLUCIONAREMOS.

¿ES SIMPÁTICA?

HE HABLADO CON ELLA APENAS UNA HORA EN LOS ÚLTIMOS DÍAS... PARECE SIMPÁTICA, PERO NO SÉ NADA DE ELLA.

POR LO QUE SÉ, PODRÍAN ESTAR LLAMANDO DESDE WOODBURY...

POR MUCHO QUE NOSOTROS LES PREOCUPEMOS, A MÍ *ELLOS* ME PREOCUPAN EL DOBLE. NO VOY A VOLVER A PONERTE EN PELIGRO EN UN FUTURO CERCANO.

ESPERO QUE SEA BUENA.

ESPERO QUE VIVAN ES UN SITIO REALMENTE BONITO Y QUE SEAN BUENA GENTE Y QUE PODAMOS VIVIR CON ELLOS Y ESTAR A SALVO.

Y YO TAMBIÉN, HIJO.

YO TAMBIÉN.

SOLO QUEDAN SOBRAS EN LA TIENDECITA DE AL LADO. NO ENCONTRAMOS NADA QUE SE PAREZCA A UN ANIMAL CUANDO SALIMOS A CAZAR.

CREO QUE TENDREMOS QUE IRNOS.

POR FAVOR, NO CONFUNDAS MI DESESPERACIÓN CON UN MOTIVO SINIESTRO. ENTIENDO LA NECESIDAD DE SER PRUDENTE... YO TAMPOCO ES QUE ME FÍE MUCHO DE VOSOTROS. PERO NO SÉ QUÉ PROBABILIDADES HABÍA DE QUE TE PUSIERAS EN CONTACTO CONMIGO ASÍ. SI NOS MARCHAMOS DE AQUÍ--YA NO VOLVEREMOS A HABLAR.

LO ENTIENDO. TODOS LO ENTENDEMOS... PERO ESTAMOS ASUSTADOS. CUANDO EMPEZAMOS A BUSCAR GENTE, NO NOS MOLESTAMOS EN PENSAR QUÉ HACER EN CASO DE ENCONTRAR A ALGUIEN.

TODO ESTO ES MUY NUEVO PARA NOSOTROS... EN ESPECIAL PARA MÍ.

MIRA-- ¿PUEDES DARME VUESTRO NÚMERO? QUIZÁS ENCONTREMOS UN TELÉFONO QUE FUNCIONE EN EL CAMINO--Y PUEDA LLAMAR DE VEZ EN CUANDO.

TE PUEDO GARANTIZAR QUE NO VOY A DEJAR QUE MI HIJO SE MUERA DE HAMBRE MIENTRAS ESPERAMOS SENTADOS JUNTO A ESTE TELÉFONO A QUE CONFIÉIS EN NOSOTROS.

NO SÉ, TENDRÍA QUE CONSULTARLO CON TODOS ANTES DE DARTE EL NÚMERO.

OH, ¿QUÉ PROBLEMA HAY? NO ES QUE PUEDA RASTREAR EL NÚMERO DE TELÉFONO DESDE AQUÍ, SABES.

VALE, VALE... TIENES RAZÓN. DEJA QUE BUSQUE EL NÚMERO.

AHORA NOS ESTAMOS ENTENDIENDO. MUCHAS GRACIAS...

...

SABES, ACABO DE DARME CUENTA DE QUE NI SIQUIERA TE HE PREGUNTADO TU NOMBRE.

RICK...

...SOY YO. SOY LORI.

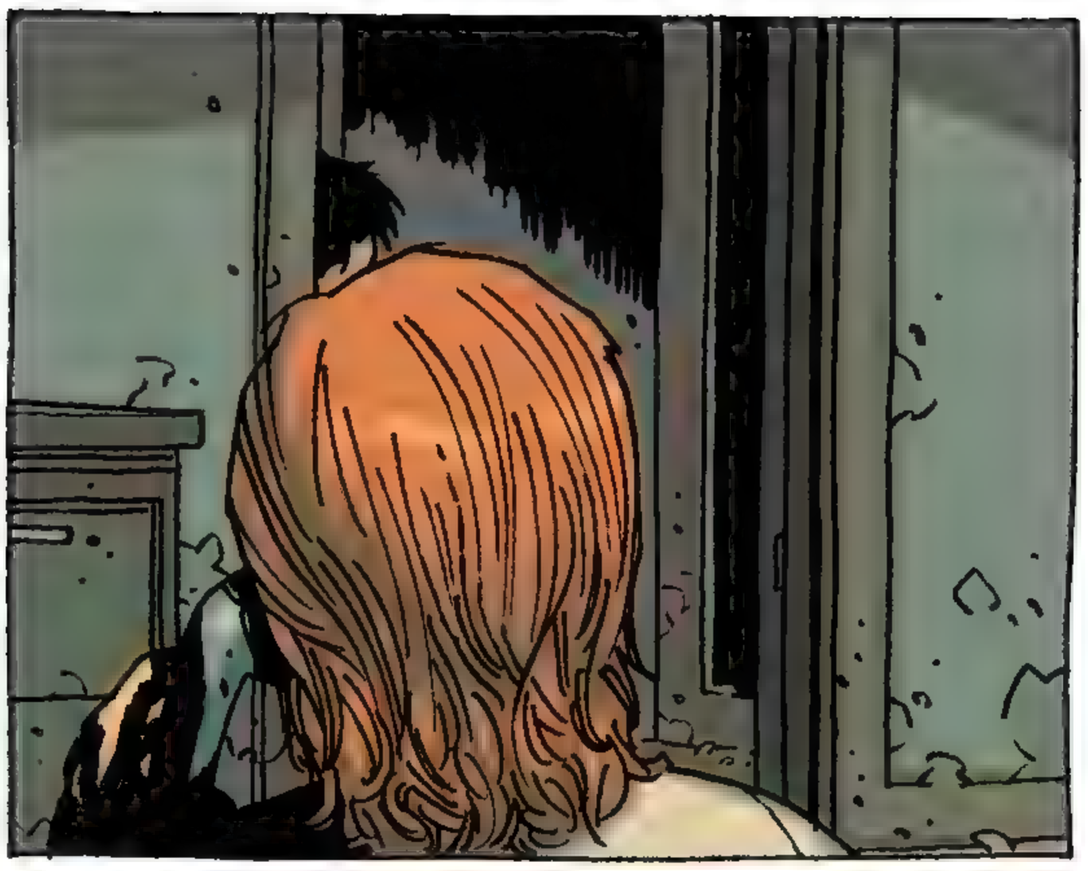
KRUK!

¿RICK? ¿SIGUES AHÍ?

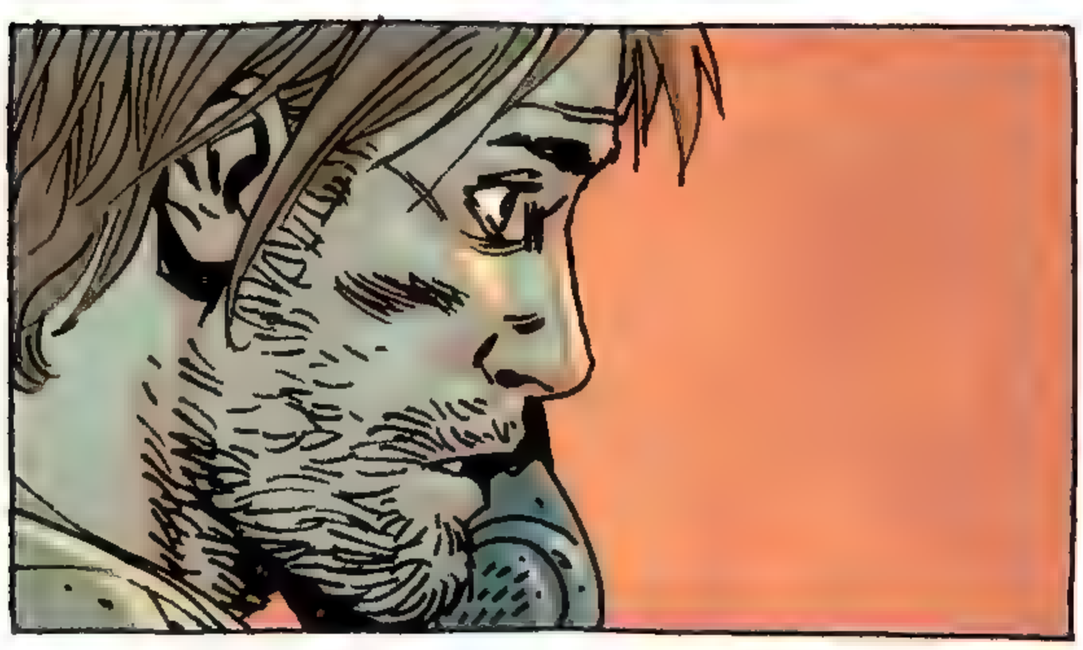
RICK.
ESCÚ-
CHAME,
RICK.

TE
CULPAS
POR LO
QUE NOS
OCURRIÓ
A MÍ--A
JUDY.
NO
FUE
CULPA
TUYA.

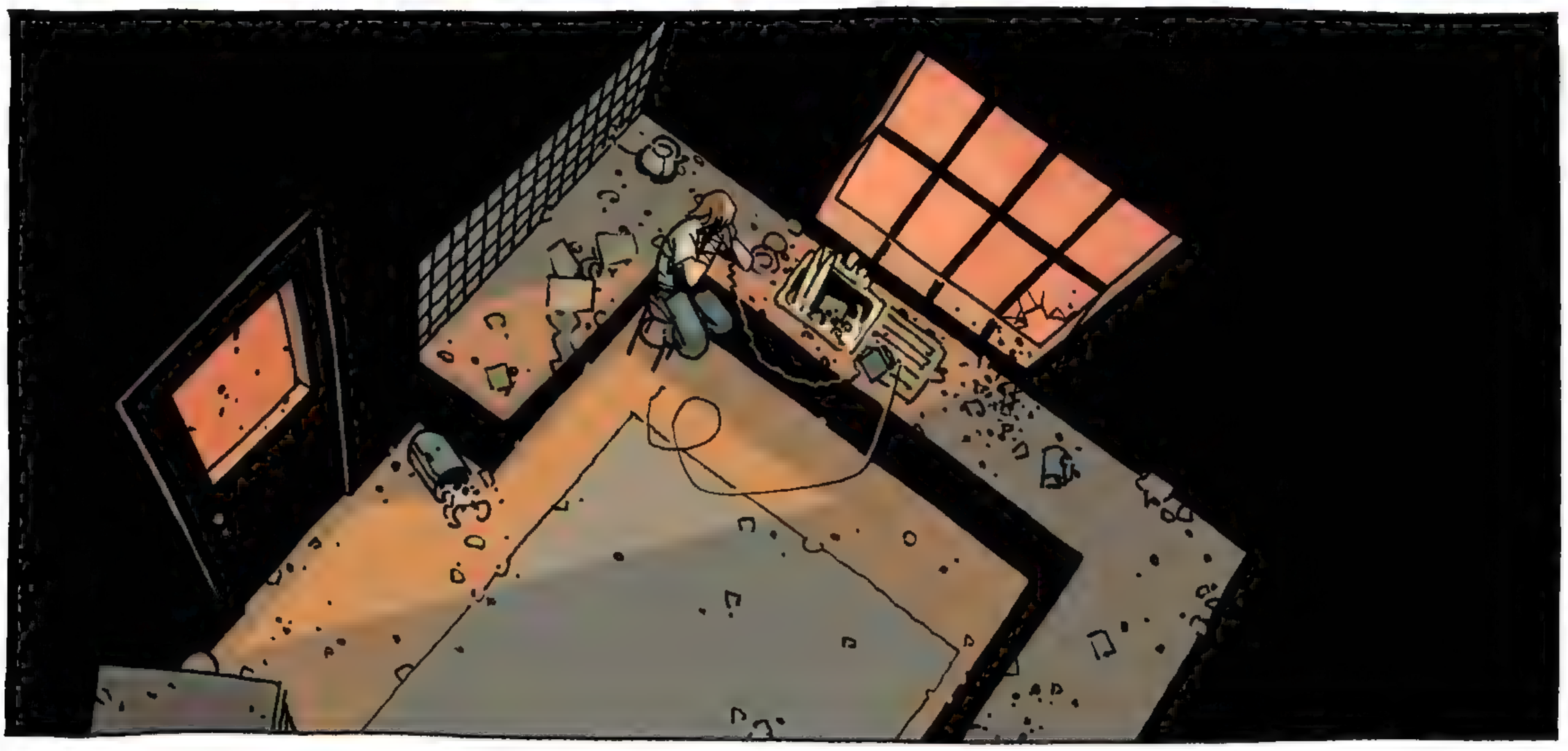
LO HICE
TODO MAL.
TODO.
TOMÉ TODAS
LAS DECISIONES
EQUIVOCADAS, ME
DEBERÍA HABER DADO
CUENTA--DEBERÍAMOS
HABERNOS MARCHADO--
DEBERÍAMOS
HABERNOS IDO.
FUI
ESTÚPIDO...
FUI--



LO SIENTO, LORI. TE QUIE--TE ECHO MUCHO DE MENOS. NO SÉ QUÉ DECIR... YO NO...
¿ESTO ES REAL?



NO SEAS TONTO, RICK.
CLARO QUE NO.



¿PAPÁ? ¿QUÉ HA PASADO?

¿ESTÁS BIEN?

¿PAPÁ?

RECOGE TUS COSAS.

NOS MARCHAMOS DE AQUÍ.

¿ESO ES TODO?

CREO QUE SÍ.

MUY BIEN...

BIEN.

¿QUÉ HAY DE LA SEÑORA DEL TELÉFONO?

¿VAMOS A IR ALLÍ?

LA SEÑORA DEL TELÉFONO ESTABA LOCA--ESA GENTE ES PELIGROSA.

OLVÍDATE DE ELLOS.

SUBE AL COCHE Y ENCIÉRRATE UN MOMENTO. VOY A ECHAR UN ÚLTIMO VISTAZO Y ASEGURARME DE QUE LO TENEMOS TODO.

ENSEGUIDA VUELVO.

VALE, ESTOY LISTO--

VÁMO-NOS.

LETTER HACKS

WRITE TO US AT: **WALKINGDEAD@SKYBOUND.COM**

Hello, readers, Amanda here. We're into a post- №*50 era now. I remember when we were discussing cover prompts months ago, really wanting to see Julian Totino Tedesco's take on this issue. Lucky enough for me, he was open to it as well. Sometimes there are just moments you know an artist is going to knock out of the park, and this was one of them. The haunting loneliness of Rick on that phone is such a striking image and elicits a really deep emotional response -- that's what great comics can do. Instead of some classic hacks this issue, we've a lovely old interview with Robert and the CBR team following up on the big milestone issue. Enjoy!*

Okay, folks... I'm knee deep in convention season and have very little time to read and respond to mail — so I've asked and the fine folks at www. comicbookresources.com have been gracious enough to allow me to run the interviews that they did with myself, Charlie Adlard, and Eric Stephenson in celebration of the release of The Walking Dead 50.

They were conducted by Michael Patrick Sullivan and ran on the Comic Book Resources website over at www.comicbookresources.com or www.cbr.cc if you prefer something shorter.

You should visit their site — they're way cool. Okay — here goes.

ROBERT KIRKMAN INTERVIEW:

Robert Kirkman began his comics career by publishing his own work through the label of Funk-O-Tron. The most notable of this output was the infamous title "Battle Pope." His success there soon led Kirkman to bigger things like a four-issue "SuperPatriot" miniseries for Image Comics, which in turn led him to shutter his own publishing house and put out his own creator-owned projects through Image. In early 2003, Kirkman launched the superhero title, "Invincible," garnering both critical and popular acclaim. Kirkman then followed up on that success with something quite different, a black and white character drama set against a zombie apocalypse called "The Walking Dead," consistently the best-selling black and white title on the stands.

As "The Walking Dead" counts down to its milestone fiftieth issue, Kirkman sat down with CBR new to discuss the fan- favorite work.

"Rick Grimes is arguably the main character," Kirkman said of his "Walking Dead" cast. "He's the only character who's been in every issue so far...and he's the only character we've really focused on at all times. For the time being at least, 'The Walking Dead' is his story. He's a small-town police officer whose life has been turned upside down by this zombie apocalypse business. He's got a young son, named Carl who will be taking a more active role in the book starting with issue 50.

"There are a lot of characters for people to get to know in the book and they come and go as characters die off and new characters are encountered. This book has amassed quite a body count over its 50-issue run."

"There are aspects of different people here and there in the characters," Kirkman said of the basis for the large, though individually distinct cast, whose diversity and lifelikeness have made the book startlingly believable despite its fantastical premise. "A lot of different characters have aspects of my personality, I think, but for the most part, I'm just making people up. Not one character is exclusively based on one person. Except for The Governor, who is exactly like Joe Quesada. They are literally exactly the same."

As readers have learned, no one is safe in "The Walking Dead." The book has seen a great many characters leave its pages, including some popular, well-liked ones. Kirkman said, though, that it doesn't get harder to make the death toll climb, no matter who it may be. "There have been times where I've held off on killing people because I didn't think they had become established enough. It's more fun to kill the characters that I'll miss. That has more impact. I've never killed off a character just to kill someone in an issue.

"For the most part, most people die because that's what would realistically happen. I recently killed off a big chunk of characters, not to shock people or shake the book up... but because a situation had arisen in the book where it would logically, be very hard to survive."

Despite their penchant for ending up six feet under, sometimes the characters spring to life in ways that even their creator doesn't expect. Said Kirkman, "There was a point in issue №18, I believe, where right up to the last-minute Lori and Rick were plotted to get into a big argument and decide to split up. That was the plan for them since the beginning of the series. I was writing the pages and I was trying to steer the dialogue to where the plot needed it to go. I'd type Rick saying something and then Lori reacting and vice versa and I just could not get them to a place where splitting up was logical. It was like I wanted two people to break up--and they started being rational and agreeable to each other right in front of my eyes... and the scene came to a close with them still together. Weird stuff."

With such a large cast and in a seemingly constant state of flux, as characters die and new ones come onto the scene, some readers wonder whether Kirkman regrets populating "The Walking Dead" with so many substantive characters.

"At times, yeah, I wish there were less characters in the book," Kirkman confessed, "but really that's the nature of this kind of book. The characters live in a very dangerous world. If there were less of them the book would be over by now. I need to inject new blood into the book from time to time. And it's fun dealing with all the different personalities and points of view. So sometimes it's frustrating but for the most part, it's exactly what makes 'The Walking Dead' the book it is."

With such challenges, "The Walking Dead" is an ambitious book that sometimes seems to make its own decisions. Said the writer, "I've had a pretty loose plan that I've followed up to this point that I had worked out before I pitched the series. I had planned for them to arrive at the prison at the end of issue №7--not issue №12. I knew Michonne [a mysterious, katana-wielding woman] was going to show up with the two zombies on leashes, but I didn't know that would be issue №19. So things changed along the way. I always planned on them getting into a battle with another well-established group of survivors, but Woodbury and The Governor specifically came to me as I wrote the series. But the main points of the book were all in place at the start of the series. There are a few bits left that I haven't gotten to yet. I had big plans when we started this series."

Kirkman still has big plans. "Once we hit issue №12 or so, and it was clear that we'd be around for a while, my mind just sort of exploded with possibilities. So at this point, I've got a roadmap that could take us to issue №300, assuming the readers want us around that long. Now, that doesn't mean I know what happens in the next 250 issues, that would be absurd, but I've got, like, ten or so big landmark events and getting to them and setting them up has a lot of little specific things that have to happen, so I don't know what issue things will fall in or even what order some of the things will happen in, but it's all just a matter of plugging in the events and working toward them."

While Kirkman has adopted a longer view of the series, it's not an infinite view. "I think the book is destined to end at some point," Kirkman confirmed. "Nothing lasts forever, and I don't see this as a 'Spider-Man-like' series that I would pass on to someone else at some point.

"Also, who knows... sales could tank at any moment, and I'd have to end the book. It's unlikely but who knows when I'll say, 'this book is more popular than Jesus and turn the whole fan base against us.

"I really, really enjoy writing this book and all I've ever wanted out of my comics career is the opportunity to write a long issue-spanning story that I control 100%, so ending that seems foolish to me. If I ever saw that I was writing on co-pilot or not enjoying things or if readers were really hating the book, I'd do us all a favor and put a stop to it. Right now I feel like I could write this book for the rest of my life and be completely happy."

As the series has grown, so has Kirkman's storytelling. "I like to think I'm a better writer now and that I consider certain angles that I hadn't or wouldn't have back then," he said. "Who knows? I certainly don't see a significant difference in my writing but I'm sure there is. I think I'm more critical of my work now. I second-guess myself a bit more now than I used to, which is something I hate because it slows down the process a bit. I used to just lay out the ideas and keep moving, but now I examine, consider other

angles, I'm doing things now that I probably should have been doing all along."

With that in mind, there is a type of story that Kirkman has yet to depict in "The Walking Dead's" pages, aside from the social, political, dramatic, comedic and horrific tales he tells from month to month. "I think it would be neat if there was a stretch of the book that was more action-oriented," the writer said, "but only if it occurred naturally. It's all about the characters at this point. I just go where they take me."

More than just Kirkman's writing has grown since the series began in 2003. "I've grown a lot as a person since I started this book," said the writer. "I'm almost 30 now, I have a son. My personal life is completely different. When I started this book I didn't have two nickels to rub together. Now I have many nickels, enough nickels. To say this series changed my life completely would not be an overstatement. My career would certainly not be where it is today without this book."

Over the last five years, "The Walking Dead" has amassed a devoted following. "It's very odd. I've talked to other creators about this, but we seek out the negative comments," the writer explained. "I'll go to a message board and skim positive messages about a given issue and then the one I read is the one that starts with 'This book sucks' or 'I quit.' We all do it, I think. It's like the negative feedback is all that matters. I print a lot of mail in 'The Walking Dead.' but a sure-fire way to get printed is to send me a critical letter. I can't do anything with 'I love this book' other than say 'thanks,' so I don't print a lot of those. I actually enjoy the little bit of negative response I get--as long as it's intelligent and not just 'This book needs more nudity and/or gore' or 'Please put out the book in color.' I could do without those."

Added Kirkman, "I think, like most creators today, there's a pretty open line of communication with the fans and myself. I'm super easy to get in touch with and I actually to respond."

Sometimes, with genre fans, there comes a point where they take ownership of the characters they love and become more possessive of them and, in turn more critical about how they're handled by those whose actual job it is to tell the story. With "The Walking Dead" hitting fifty issues, Kirkman has seen little of this syndrome.

"Not so much, thankfully," said the writer. "I know what you're talking about though, and it's always been kind of funny to me. Everyone in comics gets so bent out of shape about characters acting 'in-character.' Now, yes, Thor would probably never rape someone, and Spider-Man wouldn't rob a bank. That makes sense. But if I had Rick cut off his son's head in the next issue, that would seem way out of character, but humans--are y'know, living breathing creatures who sometimes snap, flip out--and whatever. I never show you what Rick is thinking. For all readers know, Rick has been planning on cutting Carl's head off for years. People don't always act consistently with their inner selves and people, on average, do keep a lot of emotions hidden, for whatever reason. Frankly, anyone is capable of anything, and as long as the story is told well, abrupt changes in a person's behavior is quite realistic."

With a solid fanbase and now a solid history both in sales and story, now is the time that "The Walking Dead" would be primed to move beyond its own monthly pages. But don't hold your breath. Kirkman has earned lots of attention from Hollywood regarding his zombie epic, "but I'm not going to take a deal just to take a deal," he said.

"My creator-owned work is very close to my heart and I'm lucky enough to not really need option money to survive, so I'm waiting for the right deal to come along. I don't want to just farm this thing out. I only want to do it if it's going to result in something good. I will say we came really close once and I was very excited, but this isn't horseshoes or hand grenades, so close doesn't count."

Nor is Kirkman about to start expanding out the series into a comics empire. "I think that's the mistake books make when they become as successful as 'The Walking Dead.' If I did a second series, it would make money--yes, it would be an instant success but how long would it last? I think dividing readers focus is a short-term cash-grab and a long-term detriment to the success of the book. If readers suddenly need to buy two books to get the whole story and they have to keep track of the order things occur in and things get more complicated, it weakens the integrity of the comic. Right now if you want to read 'The Walking Dead,' all you need is issues one through whatever-issue-just-came-out. Those are collected in trade paperback and hardcover to help you along--but you only need point A to point B. You don't have to know that 'The Walking Dead: Fire Bad' issues one to six take place between issues 46 and 47. If I

was only in this to make money, I'd do three 'Walking Dead' series. There'd be tons of books carrying that brand, but I'm really here to tell my story, and I recognize how lucky I am to get to do that. I'm not going to do anything to mess that up."

While a milestone like the series' fiftieth issue inspires a lot of looking back, Kirkman's also looked toward the future, both in the book and for the book. "There's a dramatic shift in the book starting with issue 48," said Kirkman. "I actually don't like talking about what's coming up in the book at all--because we've done a good job thus far of keeping things a secret and the book doesn't seem to have to telegraph upcoming big events to sell well. So things are changing a bit, and if you've read the issue you know what I mean. I will say -- the characters are out of the prison. Things are more dangerous and the book is going in new directions it hasn't gone in before. We're all very excited."

Kirkman did drop one hint. "Charlie Adlard going to be drawing more buildings very soon."

"In the real world, [there will be] more issues, more trade paperbacks and more hardcovers," Kirkman continued. "The Book Four Hardcover containing issues №37-48 will be out this year, and our second deluxe hardcover, sometimes referred to as an Omnibus, containing issues №25-48 will also be out in time for Christmas this year.

"In other news, I'm committed to getting the book out on a perfect schedule. I don't like to apologize for our schedule. We've gotten to issue 50 six months shy of five years, so I think we're doing phenomenally well for an independent series basically because has there ever been another comic that's done that? Maybe 'Cerebus,' but what other independent book has made it to №50, let alone done it in such a short amount of time. That said, there's no reason we couldn't have reached issue №50 in month №50, so that's what I'm working toward; shipping the book even better than we have been. I do feel like we owe it to the fans and retailers who've made this possible. The least we can do is get them the book on a regular schedule."

Since "The Walking Dead" debuted, zombies have become something of a cultural meme and have seen resurgence in virtually all forms of entertainment media, and Kirkman thinks they're here to stay. "I think zombies have risen to the level of vampires and werewolves and will always be a staple of popular fiction -- with highs and lows like vampires and werewolves experience -- but I think they'll always be around in some form or another and I honestly wouldn't have it any other way."

CHARLIE ADLARD INTERVIEW:

Cartoonist Charlie Adlard is a comics veteran who began his career in his native Britain on titles like "White Death" with Robbie Morrison, and Judge Dredd in "2000 AD." American readers first saw his shadowy style in Topps' "The X-Files" comics series in the mid-nineties and in "Astronauts in Trouble," the critically acclaimed flagship title from AiT/Planet Lar. After a several years of work-for-hire for many of the major publishers, Adlard found himself with a steady gig on a new and, as fortune would have it, hugely popular creator-owned title, "The Walking Dead," written by Robert Kirkman and published by Image Comics.

In recognition of the book's milestone fiftieth issue, CBR spoke this week with writer Robert Kirkman and now Charlie Adlard sits down with us to talk about his work on the last four years of "The Walking Dead."

For the unfamiliar, "The Walking Dead," follows an ensemble cast as they try to survive a world that has faced a zombie apocalypse. A stark black and white comic, "The Walking Dead" has captured the imaginations of readers with its socio-political undertones and a focus on realistic human drama over creeps and gore.

"It's not a zombie comic," Charlie Adlard told CBR News. "We wouldn't have lasted fifty issues if it was just a zombie comic. It's a character book and it's about the characters and how they survive in an extreme situation. It's more akin to things like, for want of a better word, 'Lost', the TV show. It's about people surviving in an alien environment. It just so happens that 'Lost' has an island and ours is a zombie holocaust."

Adlard continued, "The general public are aware there's a sort of zombie revival going on and as soon as you say it's a zombie book, I think a lot of people actually get a little put off by that because, you know what differentiates ours from any other zombie book."

Looking back on the series and its large and mostly deceased cast of characters, Adlard of course has his favorites. "Well, Robert's killed most of them," the artist laughed. "Actually one of my favorite characters is still alive, that's Michonne, so that's cool, but I didn't realize until after issue №48 that he'd killed all the characters that I'd actually created, apart from Michonne, because all the other characters surviving to now are from the beginning of the book. I know that's not intentional at all. It's just the way it happens.

"I do have a bigger connection with Michonne because I've been with her right from the beginning. It's nice that Robert gave me just the one," Adlard laughed again. "One left over to hang on to. Hopefully she'll be back again, but there's heaps more new characters coming in. Hopefully he won't kill them off as quickly as some of the others."

Adlard tries not to get too involved with Kirkman's side of the book. "I let him do the writing and he lets me do the artwork," he said. "Occasionally, when we have a conversation on the phone, we'll start talking about what he's planning, I leave him to do what he's good at. I'm not good at that, so most of the time I think, 'you're the professional.'

"Also, I quite like to read the scripts as they come in and be surprised like a reader is," Adlard added, "so I don't really ask that many questions. It's all right to read them and go 'oh, okay. That's cool.'"

However, being so closely involved with the book means some fore knowledge of events, but even then, surprises lurk in the script pages. Said Adlard, "I know really, really roughly what's going to be happening in the bigger arc. There, again, what he's told me three months ago has probably changed. There were a couple of deaths in issue №48 that I didn't realize he was planning, for instance. So that was as much of a surprise to me as to the readers when I read the script."

Those surprises translate into the highly emotive and fresh artwork, for which Adlard has won much praise. "It makes it fresher for me as well. If I knew every tiny detail as it was coming, I don't think I'd enjoy drawing it as much, because I'm reading it and then I'm drawing it virtually immediately which gives me that sort of excitement."

Keeping himself in the dark about the future of the storylines is just one part of what makes up Adlard's take on the zombie-ridden world of "The Walking Dead." "It's kind of interesting, my art style, because I don't have different styles, but I have different ways of drawing," the artist explained. "I don't change my style radically to suit a story, but I might change, say, equipment or something. Use something like a different sort of pen or brush for a certain story or book I'm doing. It gives it a different edge.

"With 'The Walking Dead,' I do it very quickly. The reason I did it quickly to begin with was that the first issue I had to do had to be done in two weeks. To Image and Robert's credit, they said 'It has to be done in two weeks, but please, please, please, if you can't do it in two weeks, don't worry.' I thought to myself 'No, I'll set myself a challenge. I'll do it in two weeks.' And I did kind of get it done in two weeks, so that sort of established the look."

Adlard continued, "Over the years that I've been drawing it, the quickness has worked in its favor, I think. Because it's a horror book, I think that the sort of sketchier approach that I use for it is more edgy, more angular. It's not so refined, giving it that slicker, more super-heroic look, perhaps. Because it's scratchier, it gives it that grit that more associated with harder-edged sort of stuff. So it's not just me thinking 'I've got to get the book done. Get it quickly. Get it out.' It's something that works with it."

In discussing the origins of the quick-style Adlard employs, he thought back to how he got the "Walking Dead" gig in the first place. "I knew Robert very, very vaguely," he said. "I did a book with Joe Casey, called 'Codeflesh,' for Image. The last three issues weren't actually done by Image, they were done by Robert when he was doing Funk-O-Tron [Kirkman's now-defunct publishing house], publishing 'Battle Pope.' He really liked the series and offered to publish the last three episodes. So he put them out and after that I didn't really hear from him at all until one day, I got an email out of the blue. The email actually started off with 'Do you want to earn money?'

"Obviously he knew that 'The Walking Dead' already was doing well enough to guarantee a certain amount of money. That was sort of his 'in' with me. Luckily, he just got me when I was in, shall we say a 'low period' and looking for work. I had something on the go, but it really wasn't anything to shout from the rooftops. So, in many ways 'The Walking

Dead' came along and saved me from going down another road that would have been a lot less profitable.

Charlie Adlard's involvement with the book has done a lot more for him than put money in his pocket. "I've got a lot to thank 'The Walking Dead' and Robert for in the end," said Adlard. "I wouldn't have dreamt in a million years how well this has book has done financially, professionally and creatively for me. On a professional level it's changed the way I see how I do things in the industry. Before 'The Walking Dead' I wouldn't have touched a creator-owned book with a barge pole. Primarily because I'm the artist, it takes longer to draw it than it does to write it, I have a wife and two kids, I have to support them, it's just not logical to go down that road the way the industry is at the moment.

"The only creator-owned in this industry worldwide, though I don't know about Japan, are European books. In most European books they give you a page rate, but in the United States and Britain, with a creator-owned book, you're taking the big risk. You're doing it for nothing. If it's successful, great. You reap the rewards. If it's not, you've basically just done X number of pages for free. Sure, you've fulfilled yourself creatively, but time-wise, you're exhausted and you're poor at the end of it. Doing 'The Walking Dead' has completely changed my outlook on that.

"Also, I'm lucky because I have spare time to do projects I want to do as opposed to doing it because somebody's offering me money for it. I did another project for [AiT/Planet Lar] with Joe Casey called 'Rock Bottom' which was basically, you know..." Adlard laughed. "I haven't received nickel spent for that book. I just wanted to draw it because it was so good. I'm doing a European book now and I've spent two days doing a page where, with 'The Walking Dead' I spend three hours. It's not financially viable to do it for me, but I'm able to do it because of 'The Walking Dead.' It's a fantastic position to be in."

Fans of Adlard's work on "The Walking Dead" have no cause to fear that Adlard's "better position in the industry" will lead him to seek greener pastures. He has no desire to mess with a winning formula. "I've been on 'The Walking Dead' for four years now. 'The X-Files' was only two. I see no light at the end of the tunnel in terms of me leaving the book. I can see another four, five, ten years."

Adlard remarked that he never thought he'd be able to say something like that. Because of 'The Walking Dead," the artist said, "I can see my career further ahead of me than I ever have before."

ERIC STEPHENSON INTERVIEW:

As Executive Director of Image Comics, Eric Stephenson has seen a great many properties come through the fold of the San Francisco publisher. Some titles flourish, others disappear almost as rapidly as they arrived. Occasionally, one strikes a chord with readers and can be classified a legitimate phenomenon.

One such comic book is "The Walking Dead," the best-selling black-and-white zombie epic written by Robert Kirkman and illustrated by Charlie Adlard. In anticipation of the series' landmark fiftieth issue, CBR News has over the past few days spoken with Kirkman and Adlard, previewed pages from the hotly anticipated issue, and we're joined now by Eric Stephenson to look back on the series beginnings and to talk about what the book means to Image today.

Kirkman was hardly an unknown quantity to Stephenson when the writer came to Image with his idea for a zombie drama. "By the time Robert started talking to us about 'The Walking Dead,' he'd done his first 'SuperPatriot' miniseries and we were pretty far along on 'Invincible,'" Eric Stephenson told CBR News. "I don't remember if he pitched 'Tech Jacket' or 'The Walking Dead' first, but he definitely wanted to do more work at Image, and he was really excited about doing a zombie book. Part of that was down to his enthusiasm for zombie flicks, but he was also interested in doing something other than superheroes."

Stephenson recalled, however, that Kirkman's pitch was met with some concern. "We liked it, but I know Jim Valentino [then-Publisher of Image Comics] did feel it needed to be something more than 'just a zombie book.' Zombie comics weren't really a sure thing at that point, and I think Jim felt there needed to be more of a hook than 'Hey, zombies!' Robert and I wound up discussing the book quite a bit after Jim had voiced his reservations, and my position was that it looked and read well, but that Jim wanted to know what would make 'The

Walking Dead' stand out from other zombie titles.

"Robert told me that there were going to be some other elements to the story," Stephenson continued, "some sci-fi oriented stuff that would set the whole concept apart from other zombie titles. I think the idea was that the planet was being prepared for an alien invasion or something like that. Whatever it was, I passed that on to Valentino and he seemed to think that sounded different and interesting enough to give the title a green light. A little later, probably around issue six, I asked Robert what was going on with the alien invasion, because it didn't seem like he was setting that up at all. Robert laughed and said that was never going to happen, that he'd just pulled that out of thin air in an effort to convince us the book was going to be different."

Early on, Stephenson realized the "The Walking Dead" was a bonafide hit. The numbers told the story. "The first issue sold out right away, and then the second one did, too. Reorders were very strong right from the beginning and sales started trending upwards with issue three. There was the standard drop with issue two, but then it went right back up with three and kept climbing from there."

Image moved quickly to support its new breakout title and sustain its heat. "Early on, we supported the book with things like free copies to retailers and overships," said Stephenson, "but I think the most important thing we did was rush out that first trade and make sure it came out alongside issue seven. We've worked very closely with Robert to make sure 'The Walking Dead' is always in print, in as many different formats as possible and I think that's helped immeasurably in terms of expanding the book's audience, both within the direct market and beyond."

Conversely, "The Walking Dead" has also served Image in return. Asked if "The Walking Dead's" high profile has helped Image as a whole, Stephenson responded, "In some cases, sure. We have a pretty diverse line of books, though, so not everyone who enjoys 'The Walking Dead' is going to be interested in the full line. Some horror fans or zombie fans just aren't into superheroes or fantasy or sci-fi or whatever. 'The Walking Dead' probably brings more eyes to our books, but it really depends on the tastes of the individual readers as to whether or not they're going to branch out from there.

"It's certainly put the lie to that old myth that Image only publishes a certain type of superhero comic," Stephenson added.

In an industry that seemingly became infatuated with the zombie genre, "The Walking Dead" survived this invasion of the undead, as its fiftieth issue can attest. Stephenson has his belief on what has set the book apart from and caused it to rise above from the rest of the zombie books that have been published in the last several years. "I think the appeal of the book is the characters," he said. "It's not just a zombie book. At 50 issues, I can't imagine anyone's buying the book just to look at more decaying flesh."

It's a view Stephenson confirms with his favorite moment form the series thus far. "Issue six was an early favorite of mine, I thought the scene at the end of the issue, with Carl and Shane, was really well done," he said, referring to when the ostensible lead of the series, Rick, confronts his partner Shane while hunting. Shane preferred it when Rick was thought to be dead, and even had an affair with Rick's wife, Lori. Shane attempted to get that status quo back by killing Rick, but Rick's son Carl defends his father by shooting Shane in the throat. Afterward, he cried, "It isn't like killing the dead ones." Rick assured him that "it never should be."

"I'm not a big zombie fan myself," Stephenson confessed, "but the characters definitely caught my interest right from the beginning. Issue six, and that scene in particular, was kind of the point where I really got sucked in, though."

Beyond the fiftieth issue, Image will continue to support "The Walking Dead" with trade paperbacks and hardcover omnibus editions. Stephenson says there are further things in the offing." We have other things planned, definitely, and I do think there are opportunities yet to be taken advantage of by the title. Robert and I were talking about this recently, and I think we've only begun to explore all the publishing options for this book."

Okay — next issue we'll get back into the normal letter answering business — I'll see you then!

-Robert Kirkman

NÚMERO 51

SALA DE MONTAJE

con Robert Kirkman

TWD (51) 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54

(1) YP COPIAS DE LA CASA.

(2) (1W) CARL: ¿CÓMO TE ENCUENTRAS? (2W) RICK: MEJOR -- TODAVÍA ESTÓMAGO...

(3) LEYENDO... POCA LUZ -- ARRIBA SIÉNTATE JUNTO A LA VENTANA CARL: "¿VIENES CONMIGO?"

(4) REGISTRANDO CASAS EN BUSCA DE MÁS COMIDA.

(5) MÁS... LLEGANDO A CASA... SE OYE SONAR EL TELÉFONO... RICK: "¿HAS OÍDO ESO?"

(6) RICK CONTESTA AL TELÉFONO. CARL: "¿QUÉ PASA?"

(7) TENGO QUE HABLAR CON LOS DE AQUÍ... NO DEJAN ENTRAR A CUALQUIERA... TE VOLVERÉ A LLAMAR.

(8) CAZANDO...

(9) EN EL CAMPO. MENCIONA DE SEGUIR ADELANTE EN BUSCA DE COMIDA.

(10) TIPO DE LA PORTADA...

(11) RICK CONVENCE A CARL DE DEJARLO MORIR... DEMASIADO TARDE. SOLO LOS ATRAERÍAMOS HACIA NOSOTROS... PODRÍAN SEGUIRNOS A LA CASA.

(12) ENCUENTRAN SU COCHE. RICK: "GUAU" CARL: SI TENÍA TODAS ESTAS COSAS ¿POR QUÉ SALIÓ ASÍ SIN MÁS? RICK: ....

(13) EL COCHE FUERA. HABLANDO POR TELÉFONO... LORI: PARECES DEMASIADO ANSIOSO POR SABER DÓNDE ESTAMOS... YA HEMOS TENIDO PROBLEMAS CON LA GENTE ANTES. NO NOS FIAMOS DE LA GENTE.

(14) (15) CARL DESCUBRE QUE ES UNA MUJER... SE CABREA.

(16) RICK LE EXPLICA QUE QUIZÁ TENGA QUE MARCHARSE.

(17) DESPUÉS DE TODO ESTE TIEMPO... ACABO DE DARME CUENTA... NO TE HE PREGUNTADO TU NOMBRE.

(18) A TODA PÁGINA "LORI." RICK DESENCHUFA EL TELÉFONO. ¿SIGUES AHÍ? LORI "SÍ -- "¿POR QUÉ NO IBA A ESTARLO?"

(19) RICK ENCUENTRA LA LÍNEA... HABLA CON LORI -- SE DA CUENTA DE QUE ES ELLA.

(20) CARL ENCUENTRA A RICK -- LLORANDO CON EL TELÉFONO CARL: PAPÁ -- ¿QUÉ HA PASADO? PEGADO A LA OREJA. RICK: RECOGE TUS COSAS... NOS MARCHAMOS DE AQUÍ.

(21) ENCIÉRRATE DENTRO... SOLO TENGO QUE COGER UN PAR DE COSAS MÁS ANTES DE IRNOS.

(22) RICK COGE EL TELÉFONO. LO METE EN LA MOCHILA. TERMINA CON UN PLANO GENERAL DE RICK SONRIENDO AL SALIR DE LA CASA. "VALE -- VÁMONOS."

SE DA CUENTA, RECONOCE SU VOZ. COGE EL TELÉFONO AL FINAL.

Esta época de TWD fue un gran cambio de ritmo respecto a lo que había sucedido antes. Aquí nos encontramos con un buen número individual en el que Rick y Carl estrechan lazos, funcionan juntos y construyen una relación entre ellos que se explotará en el futuro. Al mismo tiempo, tenemos la parte del teléfono.

Llegados a este punto de la serie, empezaba a querer explorar lo perjudicada que está esta gente. Después de lo que había vivido recientemente, el estado mental de Rick debía de ser cuestionable en el mejor de los casos. Así que el teléfono fue una manera de explorar lo cerca que estuvo Rick de "volverse loco". El objetivo era mostrar que el teléfono era un mecanismo de supervivencia para él. Había perdido a Lori, pero era una forma de recuperarla en cierto modo.

Me encanta la idea de que el lector, en aquel momento, no supiera lo que iba a depararnos en la historia y pensara que, de ahora en adelante, solo iban a ser Rick y Carl. ¿A que habría molado?

Me divierte pensar en lo que podría haber resultado. Desde luego, disfruté tanto escribiendo estos números que podría haberlos alargado indefinidamente. Creo que no planeé hacer tantos números de Carl y Rick, pero me lo estaba pasando muy bien, así que, ¿por qué no?

De hecho, la lista de números de la parte superior de la trama va de eso. 49-54 son los cómics que compondrían la siguiente edición recopilatoria. Así que me lo estaba pasando en grande y pensé: "Espera, necesito saber cuándo terminará técnicamente este arco para que tenga algún tipo de sentido". Quería ver hasta cuándo podía continuar con Rick y Carl antes de tener que seguir con lo que vendría después.

Las notas en la parte inferior derecha de la trama me servían para calcular el final antes de empezar a planear el número, y así asegurarme de que lo tenía todo claro.

NOTAS DE PÁGINA:

1: Solo para mostrar el paso del tiempo, copias de la casa. Una "fotocopia" es una repetición de una imagen. Así que en los cómics, cuando se repite la misma imagen en un panel, se dice "copia" para abreviar.

3: El libro que lee Carl, Elsewhere, era uno de mis libros favoritos cuando era pequeño, a la par con los libros de Narnia. Está escrito por Will Shetterly, por si queréis buscarlo.

4: Sinceramente, esta es una mala transición por mi parte. Cuando hace poco releí el cómic para esta entrega, no sabía muy bien dónde estaban. Oh, ¿es otra casa? Caray. Debería haber dejado las cosas un poquito más claras.

5: ¿Fue un despiste que no hubiera un efecto de sonido para el sonido del teléfono? ¿O fue innecesario que Carl dijera también: "¿Qué pasa?"

7: Solo estaba preparando el diálogo en la página.

10: "tipo de la portada" significa "Oh, tío... trabaja en la imagen de la portada". Lo repetiré, las portadas se hacen con mucha antelación y suelen basarse en una vaga idea de lo que tengo planeado para el número. Hay muchos números, sobre todo en la setentena, en los que esto originó algunos problemas.

11: Al final, no costó mucho convencer a Carl.

12: En la trama era sutil, y cuando lo escribí en el guion, hice más explícito el suicidio del hombre al mencionar a Carol. Supongo que es bueno volver a hacer referencia a Carol, pero quizás hubiera sido mejor que quedara más sutil.

14-15: Por lo visto, planeaba que Carl se enfadara con Rick por hablar con una mujer poco después de que Lori hubiera muerto. Afortunadamente, descarté esta trama por completo.

17-18: Así que todo esto se adelantó dos páginas para darnos más margen para cerrar las cosas.

19: Originalmente, Rick iba a descubrir que la línea no estaba conectada a la pared. Pensé que sería mejor que lo desenchufara él mismo y luego siguiera hablando, así que incluí ese pequeño cambio.

20: Las nuevas 18 y 19 se convirtieron en dos páginas emotivas con Rick. Me parece que se aprovechó bien el espacio.

21-22: El final se ciñe a lo previsto, casi igual a como lo había planeado en la etapa de elaboración de la trama. Qué gusto cuando los planes salen bien.

PORTADA
CHARLIE ADLARD
COLORES DAVE STEWART

"Lo seguía más que nada para matarlos si no eran de los nuestros."

DAVID FINCH

CHARLIE ADLARD

TULA LOTAY

NÚMERO 52

¡DISPONIBLE 7 DE DICIEMBRE, 2022!

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